Freebird by ByelerBylers

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Genre: Abuse, Alcohol Abuse/Alcoholism, Byeler - Freeform, Child Abuse, Homophobia, Homophobic Language, M/M, Violence, byler, dustin henderson and lucas sinclair dont go to school with mike and will in this fic, joyce and jonathan pass away when will is very little so will has to live with lonnie, richie is mikes cousin, takes place in 1986, will and mike are 15
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Summary:

Will Byers is a strange kid. His unusual habits and personality instantly catch the attention of Mike Wheeler. When Mike finds out Will is being abused by his biological father, Lonnie Byers, and his stepmother, Cynthia, he decides to take matters into his own hands. When no one else is able to protect Will, Mike decides to take him under his wing and they both run away from Hawkins.

Freebird

Notes for the Chapter:

> Warning: this fic will have a lot of parts that some might find triggering so proceed with caution

Will Byers was a strange kid.

He didn't speak to the other students, or at least that's what some of his classmates would say about him in their daily diatribes against the boy. He did speak to the teachers, only because he had to as a student – but only gave them brief answers, most of them one-worded. He always kept to himself, working diligently and quietly on his schoolwork while his classmates took up horseplay. When he wasn't doing that, he was scribbling whatever he drew in his sketchbook, meticulously hiding whatever he drew away from the view of others. In that manner, he was a self-conscious person. He *did* care about what other people thought of him, but he never voiced those concerns of his.

Adding on to that self-consciousness, Will was often the target of school bullies – the other kids throwing all the taunts under the sun they could think of – taunts like Zombie Boy or Fairy Byers...whatever the last one meant. Will always ignored them, never lashing out or even looking the slightest bit angry.

For that reason and many others, Mike Wheeler was intrigued by this kid.

Mike's eyes shifted from Will Byers, who sat three seats ahead to the right of him, back to his English homework he forgot to do and needed to do as that was due in his next period class. He sunk his fingers into his wavy mop of jet black hair and repeatedly tapped his pencil against his desk with his other hand – the material was frustratingly difficult.

How do you make parenting difficult for your parents?

That was the question for the typed 500-word personal writing

prompt he had due in just under 30 minutes. The problem was that he hadn't even started. He had all the answers to that, but the problem he had was making it flow smoothly in essay format. How he hated English and writing…math and science were more his forte.

"Alright class!" Mike's head snapped up to the direction of the noise. It was their science teacher, Mr. Clarke, a vibrant and outspoken man who truly enjoyed his profession. Students easily warmed up to him and felt comfortable in his teaching environment. But not even he could get Will Byers to open up.

"…Now that I'm back from that little shindig," Mr. Clarke continued, referring to a call he got from the principal's office, "We're going to continue on our lesson."

Mike's eyes briefly darted to Will who quickly pulled the sleeves of his sweater up to his wrist after placing his notebook back on his desk. It was very hot outside on this April 14th; he must have been dying under that thick cotton wool sweater.

When English class came, the students were told to line up behind the teachers desk to turn in the prompt assignment. Mike held onto his paper, his prompt answer consisting of a rushed 250-word paragraph. He was probably going to get half credit…maybe a little less for writing it by hand. At least it wasn't a zero.

Mike could see the other students turn in their papers in front of the teacher, 500 neatly typed words by typewriter that spanned a little more than half the page.

Will, who was also in his class, was ahead of him in the line.

"That's all you'll be turning in to me today, Mike?"

By the time it was his turn to hand in his haphazardly put together paper, Mike looked a little embarrassed for a moment. He simply shrugged, seeing as there was nothing he could do at this point. The teacher gave him an exasperated stare, knowing that this was almost a regular occurrence with him at this point. When the dark-haired boy was about to put his paper on the desk and leave, he saw that the previous paper dropped off had a prompt that covered the entirety of

the page, instead of the usual half page that most of the students covered.

It was the one Will dropped off.

A week later, Mike decided to ride his bike home from the arcade through a different path than usual. It was a shortcut that led through the bottom of a quarry, one that he supposed would get him home faster.

He suddenly skidded to a stop when he saw a brown haired boy sitting alone on the edge, inches away from the large body of water. He quickly recognized the boy as Will. He saw the short boy looking ahead of him in a daze. Mike clutched the handlebars of his bike and stared at him for a moment. His back to him, Will was still completely focused at the scenery ahead of them, his eyes glued onto the sunset.

Mike momentarily…for a second…thought about leaving and continuing on his way home, but his unrelenting feeling to talk to this boy crushed that thought. His strong, looming curiosity about Will would not go away and he had to satiate that longing need of actually getting to know him. This was probably the perfect opportunity to do so, away from the hustle-bustle of the school hallways and within a quiet place like Sattler's quarry.

Mike felt himself take slow steps towards Will, dragging his bike alongside him. He suddenly came to a stop when Will jerked his head in the direction of a noise – Mike's footing against the gravel.

The dark-haired boy felt his throat constrict. He had never approached nor spoken a word to Will before so this whole situation felt awkward to him. Mike cleared his throat while Will continued to stare at him, his eyes wide and face still a little disturbed from Mike's

sudden appearance.

Say something!

“Can I– can I join you?” Mike spoke up, his voice stammering. There was no going back now.

After a long pause, Will nodded. The boy clearly recognized Mike from the two classes that they had together, so it would be a little weird to refuse. Mike gave him a little smile before parking his bike and sitting next to the boy but keeping a respectful distance.

“Do you come here every day after school?” Mike asked, breaking the silence.

Mike couldn’t decipher whether Will was uncomfortable in his presence or not. Will didn’t seem like the type to make his feelings about that known, so Mike could only wonder.

“No,” Will shook his head, “Not all the time.”

Those were the first words Mike had ever heard out of Will’s mouth. Mike was momentarily surprised. Though his voice was as quiet and as soft as he imagined. He seemed pretty shy obviously. Will eyed Mike up and down, the taller of the two hugging his knees to his chest. His eyes remained ahead, the warm sunset reflecting off of his irises.

“Mike Wheeler?”

Will broke the silence.

“Yeah, that’s me,” Mike quickly replied, a bit taken aback for no discernible reason. He had no idea whether Will was calling his name out with a following request or just enunciating his name to make sure he got it right, “We have the same science and English class.”

“I know.”

Mike almost wanted to smack his own forehead. Of course he did. They literally saw each other every other day for months; they just never spoke to each other.

“It’s a really nice spot– this area over here, it’s a nice spot,” He said, fumbling on his speech. Normally, Mike was never a nervous person. He was a little awkward at times, but never nervous. He immediately came to the conclusion that Will’s presence was compounding that nervous feeling. It was as if he had to carefully pick and choose each word he wanted to say whenever he was around the other boy, “It’s a little uncomfortable on the bottom, but that’s easily fixable with a thick blanket of some sorts.”

Will let out a quiet huff in amusement, a small smile curling up on his lips as his head lay low.

“…I want to go swimming,” Mike continued, his stare glued on the lake ahead. The sunset neatly reflected off of the slow moving ripples.

Will absently fiddled with a pebble between is index finger and thumb. He peeked at the corner of is sight, assuming Mike would stand up and do so. He remained sitting instead.

“You should swim then.”

“I didn’t bring swimming trunks with me,” Mike sighed, curling his knees to his chest, “I don’t want to bike home in completely wet clothes either. That would be really uncomfortable.”

Will let out another miniscule smile, mostly at Mike’s jovial tone of voice. Mike’s eyes were on Will, his smile mirroring his.

“Have you ever swam here before?”

Will’s smile faded away.

“I can’t swim.”

Mike looked a little shocked. It was rare for him to meet anyone who didn’t know how to swim at his age.

“Want me to teach you?” The dark haired boy blurted out without thinking.

Will’s cheeks quickly turned a light pink.

“I-I-If you don’t mind that, of course. Just a suggestion,” Mike quickly said, noticing Will’s sudden discomfort, “Don’t feel pressured-”

“Okay,” Will interrupted, silencing Mike. He was a bit surprised by his admission.

Mike raised his eyebrows.

“You can teach me,” The boy said.

“Oh, okay. Great!” Mike said, grinning, “Just tell me when.”

Will nodded, giving the other a smaller grin.

Mike heard Will’s stomach rumble. Will slightly clutched at his stomach, apparently trying to get it to stop.

“Are you hungry?” Mike asked, “I have a bag of Doritos from lunch I didn’t eat. You can-”

“No, it’s ok,” Will interrupted.

Mike frowned. From his clearly audible stomach grumble, he had to have been incredibly hungry. Mike didn’t know why he’d be so quick to refuse.

They continued to sit in silence at the quarry edge, Mike occasionally dangling his feet while Will sat still. This was surprisingly therapeutic to the more outgoing Mike. The quiet chirping of the birds that flew ahead of them, the silent breeze, and the beautiful view of the lake below them added to that salutary feeling. After a hectic day at school and a frustrating venture at the arcade – him unable to beat his previous score on Super Mario – this was something he needed. Will didn’t seem to mind Mike’s presence either, hopefully. He seemed comfortable enough – probably due to the fact Mike was unjudging and uncomplaining of Will’s personality unlike a plethora of his other classmates. A good thirty minutes had passed, the sunset was lower and it was a little bit darker.

“I have to go,” Mike spoke up, “My parents are going to be pissed if I come home late tonight.”

Mike scooted back from the edge and stood up to his feet. He looked at Will who remained seated, his eyes ahead.

“Are you going home too? We can ride together if you like.”

He shook his head before looking up at Mike.

“No I’ll just stay here a while,” He replied.

“Ok,” Mike said, his voice uncertain. He continued, “See you at school.”

“See you, Mike,” He echoed.

As Mike was walking back to his bike he stole a few glances behind him, at Will who still sat there. Those were the most words he’s ever said to any other student…and that student was him. He felt a little special at that realization.

When Mike was out of sight, Will looked beside him. His eyebrows were raised when he saw a bag of Doritos. It seemed like the other boy intended to leave them there. It was right next to his lap. The boy stared at the bag of chips for a while, contemplating on what to do next. His hand drifted over it for a little bit, his movement hesitant.

He suddenly took the bag and ripped it open.

He reached in and started eating the Doritos one by one, unknowingly at a rather fast pace.

Long after the sun had completely set, Will slowly opened the front

door of his single floored home and stepped in. He quietly entered making sure not to make the door creek too much. He froze for a moment, when he saw a man sprawled across the couch – a beer in one hand sticking out from the corner of the seat. He had his eyes glued onto the TV in front of him, the only thing keeping the dark room barely alight. The television was kept to a low volume, it being background noise at this point. Knowing that, Will made sure to walk on the ball of his feet, careful not to make any noise.

As usual, he could heart his heart rate reverberating against his chest. He didn't pay much heed to that; he was used to it at this point.

The boy frowned when he heard his stomach rumble again, the feeling uncomfortable and persistent. Those Doritos weren't enough. He went to the kitchen, frequently stealing glances towards the living room to make sure the man didn't notice his presence. He went to the fridge and slowly pulled it open. He bit his lip. As usual, it was near empty. He scanned the compartments, his eyes glazing through a carton of eggs, a couple of beer bottle carriers – six beers in each, a few bottles of water, and coffee creamer.

He almost let out a sigh of relief when he saw a bag of Oscar Meyer bologna. He glanced at the living room for a last time before he peeled open the package. He pulled out three slices of deli meat – enough to subside his constant stomach growling for the night and enough for no one else to really notice the smaller amount of slices in the package. He closed package and slid it inside the fridge.

As he left the kitchen to go to his bedroom, he stepped on something brittle.

Will's face paled.

He saw the man had moved from his slouched position, fully sitting up on the couch. Will's heartbeat rose again and his breath was shaky when he saw the man staring right back at him – his stare menacing and scary. It was clear today was one of his bad days.

The man stood up on his feet, his balance uncoordinated. The empty beer bottle he previously held rolled against the floor.

Will was frozen, his hands shaking beside him. He closed his eyes. He couldn't outrun him, but he could physically shield himself from what that man was about to do to him.

Notes for the Chapter:

How was the first chapter? Was it any good? And yes, the man at the end is Lonnie Byers.